

Special Meeting of Thursday, February 24, 2011 (Commission Interviews)
One Twin Pines Lane, Third Floor Conference Room

CALL TO ORDER 7:07 P.M.

COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT: Feierbach, Warden, Lieberman, Wozniak, Braunstein

COUNCILMEMBERS ABSENT: None

Staff Present: Deputy City Clerk Plut

Interview candidates for City Commissions

Thaddeus Block (Parks and Recreation) stated that he is a resident of the Cipriani area and is involved in the community. He explained that his interest in the Parks and Recreation comes from his love of the outdoors. He and his family frequently visit the local parks and he avidly rides his bicycle at Waterdog Lake. He has an interest in the issues that confront the Parks and Recreation Commission. He stated that he followed the progress of the Semeria Park and the Bike and Pedestrian Bridge Project. He stated that he recognizes that there are funding issues in the Parks and Recreation Department as related to the Davey Glenn Park and Synthetic Turf at the Sports Complex. He stated that he read recent Commission minutes relating to the Barrett Center and dog use. He understands it to be a complex issue for which there are no immediate solutions but would be an interesting debate to have. Thaddeus stated that the City would benefit from continued use of fields and a swimming pool. He explained that if the City partnered with an outside group to fund a bigger project the City would benefit from a Community Center or a YMCA type of project without the entire financial burden. He stated that a bond measure would also be a source of funding. He stated that a property the size of Barrett could be developed to appeal to a wide range of people. He noted that the primary priority for him on the Commission would be to protect and preserve nature and open space, but also used it in such a way that fosters community. He also supports other programs such as the Sweetheart Dance that he recently attended with his daughter at the Senior Center.

Cyndi Wheeler (Planning) stated that she is not a California native but has recently moved to Belmont and is looking for ways to get involved in the community. She explained that she watches the Commission meetings. She understands that many factors are involved when making a planning decisions, but those decisions are ultimately bound by City Codes and Ordinances. She stated that her background as an attorney would aide her in making the right decisions on the Planning Commission. She stated that knowing the City's vision and goals when considering planning applications are important. She understands that because there are competing interests when trying to make a decision she would work within the constraints of the laws and codes of the City to achieve the common good. She stated that the City should not fear new business and new projects such as the High Speed Rail. She also stated that when a project is very different than what the City is accustomed to, she would take into consideration the business plan and how the project will fit into the City, and how its residents will utilize it. She likes Belmont's small town feel and believes there can be development that will retain that character. She appreciates the outdoor space that is available to Belmont residents. She sees the Carlmont shopping area as a good community gathering place but

would like to see some improvements. She would like to revitalize the Plateau-Skymont Neighborhood Association.

In response to Council concerns regarding behavior as a representative of the City on the Planning Commission Cyndi stated that her professional background as an attorney she is able to deal effectively with difficult issues and people and maintain a calm demeanor and get the information needed that is situation-appropriate. She stated that she is able to balance her time to accommodate the Planning Commission's responsibilities. She stated that she finds reading Code fascinating, and feels she has a good understanding of the commission.

Ken Parsons (Planning Commission Incumbent) stated that he believes in community service and is a qualified professional planner with a background in architecture. He feels that some commissioners do not have an understanding of their position and finds it unacceptable when they come unprepared to the Planning Commission meetings. He is frustrated at the uncivil behavior that occurs among Commissioners at times. He stated that staff reports could be better prepared but understands that some staff is still learning. He stated that he would appreciate feedback from the City Council. He explained that the Koret field issue could have been handled better. He would have liked more involvement from the Council at the onset of an issue while following the Brown Act. He stated that he would like to see the completion of the General Plan, especially the downtown area. He recognizes that the state of the economy has been a factor in the slow progress of the downtown plan evident in the empty buildings and projects that are approved, but do not have the necessary funding to complete. He stated that he would like to see the Design Guidelines and the Sign Ordinance completed.

Councilman Lieberman stated that since Commissioner Parsons has considerable background and experience on the Planning Commission, he asked if he would be willing to stop inappropriate behavior and treatment of applicants by the other commissioners. Commissioner Parsons responded that he has often placed himself between adversary Commissioners in times of heated discussions. He stated that he is committed to stand up to and against personal ineffectiveness at Planning Commission meetings. He noted that he is aware of the type of behavior of concern to Councilman Lieberman, and that he has tried to stop it when he could, and he would continue to do so.

Commissioner Parsons indicated that an individual with a civil or structural engineering background would be a benefit to the Commission. He stated that representation from all City neighborhoods is missing on the Commission. He stated that he would appreciate a joint meeting of the Commission and the Council. He also stated preliminary plan meetings could be joint meetings, or when staff believes an item will be controversial.

At this time Councilmember Wozniak asked for a brief recess to discuss the process of questioning applicants and requested that the door to the interview room be closed to the public. Councilmember Lieberman stated that this was an open meeting, and the door to the conference room was reopened. Councilmember Lieberman stated for the record that he needed to put his questions in the right framework for the candidate to answer. He reminded Councilmembers that the entire interview

process is open to the public.

Discussion ensued regarding the applicant questioning process.

Paul O’Leary (Parks and Recreation) stated that as a park commissioner he would focus on Paper Trails and Waterdog Lake. He stated that he chose the Parks and Recreation Commission because he wants to see more being done. He stated that the Davey Glen and Semeria Park projects are good because they will benefit numerous people. He sees the value of the Bike Bridge project. He stated that although many issues are discussed at the Commission meetings, not enough projects get completed. He stated that newer ideas and new perspectives are needed. He agreed that having the Commission meetings televised may bring more interest in the Belmont Parks and Recreation.

Pragati Sharma (Planning) stated that she is a 30 year Bay Area native of which she lived twelve years in Belmont. She is a Notre Dame de Namur Graduate. She enjoys living in Belmont and wants to continue to be a passionate resident. She stated that she is impressed with the Belmont Planning Commission. She has had direct contact with the Commission and has found Commissioners to be very responsive and helpful. She stated that she cares for Belmont and appreciates the open space of the Belmont Canyon and considers the trees a beautiful part of the City. She stated that she would like to see a more robust downtown as there is much opportunity for growth. She would like to see more business move to Belmont. She stated that the recent decision of waiving fees for SunEdison was a step in the right direction. As a Commissioner she would continue the diplomacy of the Commission. She understands that not all decisions are made with ease and that it is important to stay on track. She stated that legislation is important although there are ways to offer solutions while still following policy. She stated that it was the right time for her to commit herself and time to the Commission. She stated that she wanted to be a part of the governance of the City and a part of the solution, not the problem.

Donnelle O’Connor (San Mateo County Mosquito and Vector Control) stated that she was born and raised in Belmont. She applied for the position because of her interests in how disease is spread knowing that mosquitoes are a major factor. She stated that she is a member of the San Mateo County Bee Guild. She stated that she is looking forward to attending the Mosquito and Vector Control meetings and reporting back to the Council on a regular basis.

Councilmember Lieberman recommended that Ms. O’Connor be appointed to the SMCO Mosquito and Vector Control District.

Discussion ensued.

ACTION: On a Motion by Councilmember Braunstein and seconded by Councilmember Lieberman Donnell O’Connor was unanimously Appointed Belmont as the Belmont Trustee to the San Mateo County Mosquito and Vector Control District by a show of hands.

ADJOURNMENT at this time, being 8:50 P.M.

Jozi Plut
Deputy City Clerk

Meeting Tape Recorded but not Videotaped
Audio Recording 781